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Charles IV and learned order: The discourse on knowledge in 'Der meide kranz'

Oetjens, Lena

Abstract: Charles IV and Learned Order: The Discourse on Knowledge in 'Der meide kranz' By establishing the University of Prague, Emperor Charles IV pursued a synthesis of religion and knowledge, which itself helped to define his self-conception as a ruler. The vernacular poetry of the Prague Court in the fourteenth century also bears witness to intense contemporary interest in the natural sciences and the dynamic strategies of legitimation via Christian argument. A case in point is the poetry of Heinrich of Mügeln. Charles IV plays a special role in 'Der meide kranz' in which Heinrich of Mügeln presents him as a wise and venerable ruler. He builds on known models, such as Alan of Lille's 'Anticlaudianus', and maps a court situation whose inherent and depicted order invites a specific evaluation of the ruler. I shall consider Heinrich's definition of philosophy, which is expressed via an angel-motif, and how the text gives fresh insight into Charles's image as a reformer of the empire. Karl IV. als Ordnungstifter: Der Wissensdiskurs in 'Der meide kranz' Mit der Gründung der Prager Universität strebte Kaiser Karl IV. eine Balance von Religion und Wissen an, die sein Herrschaftskonzept insgesamt prägt. Ein Blick auf die vernakulare Dichtung am Prager Herrscherhof des 14. Jahrhunderts bezeugt eine intensive Auseinandersetzung mit den Erkenntnissen der Naturwissenschaften und der christlichen Weltordnung. In 'Der meide kranz' kommt Karl IV. eine besondere Rolle zu: Heinrich von Mügeln stellt ihn als gelehrten und sakral-theologischen Herrscher dar. Er konstruiert anhand bekannter Vorbilder wie dem 'Anticlaudianus' Alans von Lille Entscheidungssituationen, deren inhärente Ordnung spezifisch auf die Urteilsfähigkeit Karls IV. zugeschnitten ist und ihm als Richter zugleich kaiserliche und sakrosankte Macht zuspricht. Das Engelsmotiv, das zugleich religiös und (in Hinsicht auf die Sphärenbewegung) naturwissenschaftlich besetzt ist, legt die diskursive Spannung des Textes offen.

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CHARLES IV AND LEARNED ORDER: THE DISCOURSE ON KNOWLEDGE IN ‘*DER MEIDE KRANZ*’

LENA OETJENS

ABSTRACT

By establishing the University of Prague, Emperor Charles IV pursued a synthesis of religion and knowledge, which itself helped to define his self-conception as a ruler. The vernacular poetry of the Prague Court in the fourteenth century also bears witness to intense contemporary interest in the natural sciences and the dynamic strategies of legitimation via Christian argument. A case in point is the poetry of Heinrich of Mügeln. Charles IV plays a special role in ‘*Der meide kranz*’ in which Heinrich of Mügeln presents him as a wise and venerable ruler. He builds on known models, such as Alan of Lille’s ‘*Anticlaudianus*’, and maps a court situation whose inherent and depicted order invites a specific evaluation of the ruler. I shall consider Heinrich’s definition of philosophy, which is expressed via an angel-motif, and how the text gives fresh insight into Charles’s image as a reformer of the empire.

Keywords: Heinrich of Mügeln: ‘*Der meide kranz*’ – Charles IV as a judge – philosophy – arranging nature

1. Introduction

Heinrich’s poetry has been assessed critically, not least for his distinctive manner of presenting and distinguishing content. S. Köbele contrasts Frauenlob’s generic preference for ambiguity (intentional vagueness and paradox) with Heinrich’s obsessive pleasure over recurring decision-making processes.¹ Meanwhile, ‘*Der meide kranz*’ has been described as a static system by Ch. Huber, owing to its supposed lack of innovation as compared to Alan of Lille’s ‘*Anticlaudianus*’.²

Making distinctions for Heinrich is not an end in itself, but rather serves to emphasize something else. Let us consider how Emperor Charles IV acts as judge in the first part of Heinrich’s poem. The device of judgement appears in other contemporary texts, but

¹ Susanne KÖBELE, *Frauenlobs Lieder – Parameter einer literarhistorischen Standortbestimmung*, Tübingen 2003 (= Bibliotheca Germanica 43), p. 252: “Mügeln setzt sich poetologisch und konzeptionell entschieden von Frauenlob ab. Auf dessen Poetik einer nicht mehr geschlossen-allegorisch hierarchisierten widersprüchlichen Sinnvielfalt reagiert er mit einer fast obsessiven Lust an *underscheit* und *ordnung*, Ordnungen in Unterordnungen unablässig wiederholend. Mit dieser Einstellung fügt Mügeln sich ganz in die Tendenz des Spätmittelalters, das immer entschiedener Wissen als Unterscheidungswissen, Rationalität als vernunftgeleitete Unterscheidungsfähigkeit definiert.”

² Christoph HUBER, *Die Aufnahme und Verarbeitung des Alanus ab Insulis in mittelhochdeutschen Dichtungen. Untersuchungen zu Thomasin von Zerkläre, Gottfried von Straßburg, Frauenlob, Heinrich von Neustadt, Heinrich von St. Gallen, Heinrich von Mügeln und Johannes von Tepl*, München 1988 (= Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen 89), p. 305: “Der eigentliche Anstoß des ‘*Anticlaudianus*’ ist abgeschnitten. Mügeln entwickelt keine Erneuerungshandlung, sondern ein statisches System. Die bereits festliegende Zuordnung der Mächte erfährt eine Klärung, nicht eine Veränderung als ‘restitutio’.”

Heinrich of Mügeln completes his multi-stage discussion about the order of knowledge with a self-referential reflection. ‘*Der meide kranz*’ combines the decision-making process with the representation of emperor and poet. E. Schlotheuber refers to the importance of creating a successful image of Charles IV as a ruler with secular and sacrosanct power: “*Nicht mehr die Interessensdurchsetzung mittels Gewalt, die in Turnieren und Fehden ihren gesellschaftlich akzeptierten Ausdruck fand und Leben und Handeln des Vaters Johann maßgeblich bestimmt hatten, sondern vielmehr die friedliche Beilegung der Konflikte auf dem Verhandlungsweg oder vor Gericht sollten nun ausschlaggebend sein. [...] Um friedliche Konfliktlösungen zu ermöglichen, musste im umkämpften Böhmen jedoch erst eine Legitimationsbasis, also gleichsam erst Raum geschaffen werden – ein Weg, den der Luxemburger mit der Sakralisierung der eigenen Machtsphäre energisch beschritt.*”³

Reactions to the same statement in the poem vary, especially about a delicate role of Heinrich’s angel-motif. A critical eye to Heinrich’s notions about philosophy helps for understanding the structure and intention of ‘*Der meide kranz*’.

2. Charles IV as Judge in the Literature of fourteenth-century Prague

As E. Schlotheuber emphasizes, Charles IV did not correspond to the traditional image of his chivalrous ancestors. Rather, he replaced warfare with diplomacy and founded the University of Prague. To earn the respect of noblemen, he needed to dominate public space and to establish a claim to power with a specific projection of himself as a wise and venerable ruler.⁴

This tension between knowledge and faith grew large in the contemporary discourse, as we see in a well-known letter to Charles IV, probably written by his chancellor Johann of Neumarkt.⁵ He speaks, for instance, of the risks of logic and mathematics.⁶ As an example of possible imbalance, we read: “*Suscitare ab ignorancie nebulis, imprudens Episcopo, assumpti laboris contempnas ineptias, a squalenti sterilitate declinans oculos tui intellectus ad amena paradisi florentia semper nemora ymaginacione beata conuerte! Astrorum*

³ Eva SCHLOTHEUBER, *Der Ausbau Prags zur Residenzstadt und die Herrschaftskonzeption Karls IV.*, in: Prag und die großen Kulturzentren Europas in der Zeit der Luxemburger (1310–1437). Internationale Konferenz aus Anlass des 660. Jubiläums der Gründung der Karlsuniversität in Prag, 31. März – 5. April 2008, Praha 2008, pp. 601–621, p. 602f.

⁴ E. SCHLOTHEUBER, *Der Ausbau Prags zur Residenzstadt*, p. 608f.: “Die ungeheuren Anstrengungen [...] entspringen vielmehr der Notwendigkeit, die eigene Rolle zeremoniell und symbolisch innerhalb der Gesellschaft zu verankern und mit allen zur Verfügung stehenden Medien, in Architektur und Skulptur, in Schrift und Bild umzusetzen. Dieser Strategie verdanken wir auch die vielen schriftlichen Zeugnisse sowohl aus Karls eigener Feder als auch aus der Feder hofnaher Kreise.”

⁵ Cf. Christoph HUBER, *Alanus ab Insulis in mittelhochdeutschen Dichtungen*, p. 260f, Michael STOLZ, *Vivus est sermo tuus. Religion und Wissen in der Prager Hofkultur des 14. Jahrhunderts*, in: Klaus Ridder – Steffen Patzold (edd.), *Die Aktualität der Vormoderne. Epochenentwürfe zwischen Alterität und Kontinuität* (Europa im Mittelalter 23), Berlin 2013, pp. 267–294.

⁶ M. STOLZ, *Vivus est sermo tuus*, p. 288: “Nam philosophia contempta ad eam nunc supernaturalem philosophiam intellectus mei aciem dispono conuertere, que non rationum probabilium argumentis innititur, non loyca cauillatione distrahitur, non mathematica persuasione fulcitur, sed in eo beatam sibi sedem vendicat, in eo veritatis fundamenta metatur, qui lapis abscisus de monte sine manibus sue virtutis inuicta potencia sustinet vniuersa.”

loca, cursus et numeros cum suo Ptolomeo, Esculapio vel Hermete relinquo Egipciis, et imperatoris eterni, domini Dei pro te crucifixi, comitare vestigia.”⁷

The letter reveals how some refused to make a radical choice for one way over another. This sort of rejection of knowledge makes no sense in an intellectual capacity. The solution might be again to combine knowledge with virtue by turning to an authority who – with secular and sacrosanct power at the same time – can decide about the balance of knowledge and faith. Nonetheless, the letter gives insight into contemporary events at the Prague Court: whereas Charles IV realizes an extensive religious programme (e.g., elevating Prague to an archbishopric, founding the university after the model of Paris, building St. Vitus Cathedral and sponsoring many reliquaries), there were also critical noblemen and scholars around him. Poetry makes it possible to expound different aspects of an issue, even delicate and controversial ones, as long as the texts do not overstep accepted limits. Charles IV was a patron of literature and arts: they were means of expressing his status and self-conception.⁸ We know of other texts that served such a function, such as the anonymous dialogue ‘*Cogor adversum te*’⁹ or the ‘*Sangspruchdichtung*’.

‘*Der meide kranz*’, which means ‘The Garland of the Virgin’ was composed shortly after the year 1355. The poet, Heinrich of Mügeln, was a learned lay person with a clerical education. In ‘*Der meide kranz*’ Heinrich probes the tensions between knowledge and faith, and he combines the cult of the Virgin Mary¹⁰ with the question of the world order.

The first book presents a debate between twelve personified domains from the arts and sciences. The Emperor Charles IV acts as judge. In his verdict, he chooses *Theologia* as victor. She has the honour of setting the first gemstone in the garland of the Virgin. That verdict is in turn confirmed by the personifications of nature and the twelve virtues. The second book then contains a debate between nature and the virtues, in which the figure *Theologia* acts as a mediator, and ends by granting precedence to the virtues.¹¹ *Natura* still enforces her stature and views via an exploration of the cosmological order and the twelve signs of

⁷ M. STOLZ, *Vivus est sermo tuus*, p. 290; transl. L. Oetjens: “Be taken up from the fogs of ignorance, silly bishop! You should disdain the foolishness of the effort you undertook! Turn through blessed musing the eyes of your mind from a squalid wasteland to the pleasant, ever flowering groves of paradise. The places, paths and numbers of the stars with their Ptolemy, Aesculapius and Hermes, leave them to the Egyptians, and rather follow the trace of the Eternal Emperor, the Lord God, who was crucified for you.”

⁸ František KAVKA – Rosemarie BORÁN, *Am Hofe Karls IV.*, Stuttgart 1990, p. 158f.: “Die Hochachtung vor der Kunst und die Verehrung der Schönheit überhaupt hatten an Karls Hof ihre zeitgebundenen, religiös-philosophischen Wurzeln. Grundlage war die Lehre des heiligen Augustinus, die davon ausging, daß sich der Erkenntnisprozeß über das Auge vollziehe: Erst durch die Widerspiegelung in der menschlichen Seele nehmen Gegenstände und durch sie ausgedrückte Eigenschaften tatsächliche Gestalt an. Man glaubte, Schönheit in der Natur sowie in den Schöpfungen menschlicher Hände verbinde als höchstes Gut die irdische mit der überirdischen Welt, durch das Empfinden des Schönen näherte sich der Mensch ‘unsichtbar an der Hand geführt’ Gott.”

⁹ Bernd-Ulrich HERGEMÖLLER, *Cogor adversum te: drei Studien zum literarisch-theologischen Profil Karls IV. und seiner Kanzlei*, Warendorf 1999. He identifies some common ground for philosophical arguments in ‘*Cogor adversum te*’ and ‘*Der meide kranz*’, here p. 70f.: ideas of the emanations, the contrast between the sinful world and the divine realm of heaven, Charles’s judgement as highest judicial authority on earth.

¹⁰ F. KAVKA, *Am Hofe Karls IV.*, p. 155: “Das Interesse an kontemplativer Literatur brachte Karls Hof in enge Beziehung zur Bewegung der ‘devotio moderna’ (neue Frömmigkeit). [...] Zeugnis der Verehrung der Gottesmutter legen die Dichtungen Heinrichs von Mügeln sowie das von Ernst und offenbar auch Karl IV. inspirierte Werk des Dichters der Prager Kartause, Konrad von Haimburg, ‘Laudes Mariae’ (Marienlob) ab.”

¹¹ This part especially refers to the ‘Anticlaudianus’; Ch. HUBER, *Alanus ab Insulis in mittelhochdeutschen Dichtungen*; Johannes KIBELKA, *Der ware meister. Denkstile und Bauformen in der Dichtung Heinrichs von Mügeln*, Berlin 1963.

the zodiac. Yet in the closing twelve lines, the narrator – called the *meister* – upholds *Theologia*'s preference. As a whole, we have, then, a three-stage evaluative process involving science, theology, nature and the virtues. The Emperor Charles through his action gives a prefiguration of the emergent final judgement. Heinrich installs Charles IV as an instance of ordering knowledge, himself focused on the sciences. The seven liberal arts are framed by *Philosophia* and *Theologia*, and joined additionally by three subjects: *Phisica*, *Alchimia*, and *Metaphisica*.

In a close reading I want to ask, on the basis of its angel-motif, how Heinrich of Mügeln engages and develops the tension between knowledge and Christian faith. Angels, of course, symbolize at once both religious and cosmological forces.

3. Heinrich of Mügeln's Idea of Philosophy and the Discursive Angel-Motif

Since the reception of Aristotle and the new dynamism of learning in the twelfth century, the significance of philosophy as such was being reassessed. Philosophy was commonly divided into natural, moral and metaphysical philosophy.¹² Ch. Huber identifies different concepts of philosophy in Heinrich's poetry.¹³ '*Der meide kranz*' seems to give a crude series of philosophical variants at first. But based on separate Latin characterisation of another text by Heinrich (Clm 14574, 145v–146r),¹⁴ Huber finds an order which is perhaps not consistent with what then seemed 'modern', but was nonetheless comprehensible: "*Mügeln isoliert aus der alten umfassenden philosophia die oberste Theoriestufe, die antike 'Theologie', und placiert sie als 'Metaphysica' zwischen Naturlehre und eine christlich-dogmatisch verstandene Theologie.*"¹⁵

In the debate between the arts in the first book it is important to separate belief in angels¹⁶ from cosmological knowledge concerning celestial movers¹⁷ (though these may overlap with angels in a Christian perspective¹⁸). Angels and celestial movers appear several times in the '*Der meide kranz*', and their respective valuation differs in each case.

At the beginning of the first book (MK 69–118, 119–896) the emperor puts the arts in their place, and especially criticizes the natural sciences, while at the same time he extols *Theologia*. The twelve speakers (with 50 lines each) are consecutively mated with attributes appropriate to their skills and field of activity, and by a special closing turn linked

¹² Jürgen SARNOWSKY, *Zur Entwicklung der Naturerkenntnis an den mittelalterlichen Universitäten*, in: Peter Dilg (ed.), *Natur im Mittelalter*, Berlin 2003, pp. 50–69; here p. 52.

¹³ Christoph HUBER, *Philosophia-Konzepte und literarische Brechungen*, in: W. Haug – B. Wachinger, *Literatur, Artes und Philosophie. Reisensburger Gespräch*, Tübingen 1992, pp. 1–22; here pp. 16–18.

¹⁴ J. KIBELKA, *Der ware meister*, p. 40; Karl STACKMANN (ed.), *Die kleineren Dichtungen Heinrichs von Mügeln. Zweite Abteilung, mit Beiträgen v. M. STOLZ*, Berlin 2003 (= Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters 84), p. 30: Inc. I. *Philosophia in se cunctas recludit ciencias [...]* II. *In fretum parens fluminum [...]* III. *Quid motor primus sit, indicat philosophia.*

¹⁵ Ch. HUBER, *Philosophia-Konzepte und literarische Brechungen*, p. 18.

¹⁶ The Bible twice evokes the number of the angels: Dan. 7,10: "Millia millium ministrabant ei, et decies millies centena milia assistebant ei."; Apoc. 5,11: "Et vidi et audiui vocem angelorum multorum in circuitu throni et animalium et seniorum et erat numerus eorum milia milium." Thomas Aquinas discusses the question in his '*Summa theologiae*', 1a 1ae, quaest. 50, art. 3: "Utrum angeli sint in aliquo magno numero."

¹⁷ ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysica*, XII, 8.

¹⁸ Cf. Calcidius' translation and commentary of PLATO's *Timaeus*.

to the Incarnation. While they mean to recommend themselves to the emperor, they inflate their claims; the natural sciences stand out by their over-estimation of their abilities. The emperor pronounces his verdict in light of that. *Aritmetica*, for one, can count many things and explain number-relations. Her skills are essential for statesmen and merchants (MK 354–359). But in the end she oversteps the limit (MK 361–368): “*Ich zalt uß gottes herzen gar / der engel und der geiste schar. / des mag ich in der kronen stan, / sint ich nach zal gegeben han / hie gottes kinde sin gelit, / das in das herze wart gesmit / der meit, von eines wortes kraft / mit geistes flichtikeit durchsaft.*”¹⁹ Charles’s verdict says she cannot count everything: Christ’s wounds are countless (MK 815–820). It is remarkable that Charles does not criticize the enumerating of angels here.

Philosophia and *Metaphisica* overlap somewhat and call for nuance; the latter is not clearly separable from philosophy and theology. *Philosophia* claims to have invented the order of nature, and the ability to explain it, including the angels and God (MK 137–140): “*Und wie das got hab keine stat, / und wie der engel wegen gat / gein im nach der naturen ler, / und wonet uß der achten sper.*”²⁰ The emperor’s verdict contradicts that claim: the natural order comes from God and is part of his Creation (MK 793–799): “*Mich dunkt die erste meit / von stören und geben seit, / und wozu hat nature pflicht, / daruf sie buwet ir geticht. / die letzte, wer des hersche gar / und ouch naturen gebe nar.*”²¹

Metaphisica addresses cosmology, too. She straddles the divide between nature (*naturen fluß*, MK 644) and the other arts. Her example points at certain angels (MK 657–659): “*Ouch ist das von der lere min, / wie das der engel achte sin, / die alle speren wegn in tat.*”²² Charles IV reacts very aggressively this time; her teaching contradicts his faith: “*Die eilften lobt ich immer me: / nu dunkt mich, wie ir tichten ste / swerlich gein dem gelouben min: / sie lert mich, wie acht engel sin.*”²³ The risk of conflict between claimed knowledge and established faith is apparent here. Although the aspects of counting (MK 361–368) and celestial movers (MK 137–140) have been mentioned before, *Metaphisica* oversteps the theological limit. From a religious point of view, angels are countless because of their myriad number (the Bible is certainly clear on more than eight) or because they are non-material beings (as

¹⁹ Annette VOLFING, Heinrich von Mügeln: ‘*Der meide kranz*’. A Commentary, Tübingen 1997, p. 106: “I counted the hosts of angels and spirits from God’s heart. Therefore I may rightly stand in the crown, since I have given limbs in number to God’s child, who was forged into the heart of the maiden, who was permeated with the moisture of the Spirit through the power of one Word.”

²⁰ A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 45: “And [I teach] how God has no location and how the movement of the angels goes against him according to the teachings of natural philosophy, and how [he] lives beyond the eighth sphere.”

²¹ A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 185: “It seems to me that the first maiden speaks of corruption and generation and the rightful operations of Natura. That is the basis of her teaching. The last one speaks of him who is the absolute ruler and also gives nourishment to Natura.”

²² A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 165: “My teaching also states that there are eight angels who actually move all the spheres. God’s providence moves as a final cause.”

²³ A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 186: “The eleventh one I always praised: yet it now seems to me that her teaching stands squarely in opposition to my faith. She teaches that there are eight angels.”; Michael STOLZ, *Artes-liberales-Zyklen. Formationen des Wissens im Mittelalter*, Tübingen – Basel 2004 (Bibliotheca Germanica 47), p. 574: “An der Metaphysik tadelt der kaiserliche Richter, dass sie zu wenig genau zwischen den Bewegern der acht Himmelssphären und der zahllosen Engelschar der himmlischen Hierarchien unterscheidet; dies impliziert, dass die Metaphysik ungerechtfertigterweise von ihrem Gebiet der Seinsordnungen (hier der Sphärenbeweger) zu jenem der Theologie (hier der Engelshierarchien) übertrete (vv. 853–858).”

Thomas Aquinas explained).²⁴ *Metaphisica* names herself *kunst gottes* and does not accept that faith does not have to be completely explicable.

Theologia is undoubtedly the winner. Charles IV praises her and does so again via the angel-motif (MK 857–861): “*Die letzte engel ane zal / setzet: der ich geleuben sal. / nie falschen spruch ich in ir fant: darum üch allen si bekant, / das sie die wirde süle han.*”²⁵ The layman emperor considers matters with an eye to his own salvation. The effect is cumulative. Charles himself combines knowledge and *zucht* (MK 893–896), and the verdict ensues: “*Natura spricht, es si ein ban, / wer kunst will ane sitten han; / kunst ane zucht sie achtet nicht, / wann sie hat alle kunst geticht.*”²⁶ Nevertheless, the discussion about the angels (including the cosmological aspects) that is finally decided by Charles’s verdict illustrates Huber’s approach to the systematization of philosophy and supports his view that *Metaphisica* advocates and represents an ‘ancient’ conception of knowledge.

In the second part of the first book (MK 897–1356), the arts and the virtues proceed to *Natura*, they confirm Charles’s verdict, and *Theologia*’s priority. At this point, *Natura* builds the garland of the Virgin, and she sets twelve equal gemstones in it (MK 1347–1356).²⁷

In the second book, where the virtues are ranked (MK 1357–2288), angels stand in for created beings, while Heinrich makes four particular virtues discuss the fall of Lucifer as the beginning of evil. The main thing here is keeping peace, and we should note how the peace-loving virtues – justice, humility, truth, peace – are emphasized with an eye to Charles himself as an idealized emperor.²⁸

The virtues and *Natura* argue over their relative standing. The virtues point to the bad example of the vanquished hybris of the ‘artistic’ skills or disciplines in the first book. By contrast, the virtues themselves use arguments of faith following the model of *Theologia*. *Theologia*’s verdict will thus affirm the virtues, but conclude that they belong together as ordained by God (MK 2257–2272).²⁹ We find an instance, here too, of the angel-motif, when Heinrich makes Lucifer’s fall³⁰ the subject of discussion. Four of the virtues speak

²⁴ Cf. note 16.

²⁵ A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 186: “The last one puts forward angels without number: Her I shall believe. I never found an untrue statement in her and for that reason she shall have the honour.”

²⁶ Transl. L. Oetjens: “*Natura* says it is a disgrace if someone means to have skill without good form; she has no regard for skill without good form, for she herself has fashioned every skill.” Cf. A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 200.

²⁷ A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 232: “Die tugend und der künste schar / des tichtes forme nigen gar / und die Natur, und gink zuhan, / da sie die richsten kronen fant, / die alle schon gar übertrit, / wann sie got selber hat gesmit, / und krönte da die maget rich. / zwelf stern in der kronen glich / da stunden; ewik was ir schin. / – hie sal des buches ende sin.”

²⁸ The theological virtues – love, hope, faith – close and culminate the complete list.

²⁹ A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 332f.: “The third argument is as follows: before nature was created, [and] the heavens, the sea and all things, the angels and the circle of the stars – before that, God must have possessed virtue, out of which the existence of *Natura* emanated. Without virtue, God could not have brought about the creation of nature. Virtue is widely called ‘God’, in all seriousness. One says, ‘The virtue *caritas* was the virtue of God and [identical with] God himself.’ By this it is clearly proven that *Natura* derived her nourishment from God’s virtue, without any doubt: therefore virtue shall have the [highest] honour.”

³⁰ Isaiah 14,12–15: “*Quomodo cecidisti de caelo, lucifer, qui mane oriebaris; corruisti in terram qui vulnerabas gentes. qui dicebas in corde tuo, in caelum conscendam, super astra Dei exaltabo solium meum, sedebam in monte testamenti in lateribus aquilonis; ascendam super altitudinem nubium, ero similis Altissimo. verumtamen ad infernum detraheris in profundum laci.*”

about the sin of pride,³¹ which is punished by God, and which here leads to a clash over the angel-motif already familiar from the discourse on the arts in the first book:

Gerechtikeit (justice) connects the fall from Heaven with the Fall of Man. Moreover, she calls herself the guard of heaven by pointing out her evenhandedness, and warns in addition against the danger of pride (MK 1537–1548): “*Ich hüte gottes herzen pfort: / scharf ist mins rütelinges ort, / darin die hochfart sich versneit, / das sie muß immer tragen leit: / min hant sie und ir engel all / treip von dem himmel hin zutal. / da sie ufbruch ir wille truk. / ouch uß dem paradys ich sluk / den ersten menschen, da er brach / den apfel von des boumes dach. / der bruch der widerspenikeit / muß von mir immer tragen leit.*”³²

Demütikeit (humility) has been involved in the First Fall, too. Her duty is to discern between good and evil (MK 1800–1808): “*Min hant den ersten engel stieß / gewaldik in der helle tal, / darinn er ewik bliben sal: / sust ich den menschen nider hie, / der minen wek erkante nie. / gewalt wer an mich halden wil, / des fal hat endelosen zil. / wo ich nicht vor dem menschen ge, / zu gott er kummet nimmer me.*”³³

Warheit (truth) is an essential element of Creation; she thus also is a key touchstone and criterion (MK 1855–1866): “*Ich bin sin wort und ouch sin kint: / von mir gesat die himmel sint, / die stern und ouch der speren kraft; / das mer got in mir hat geschafft, / die erde, für und ouch die luft, / die engel und der helle gruft. / got an mich möchte nicht gesin, / des bin ich aller tugnde schrin. / min hant der himmel geiste helt. / welch menseche das sich von mir spelt / und minen stik verleßet gar, / das schert sich von der engel schar.*”³⁴

Fride (peace) follows with a reference to the celestial movers, but she concentrates on the Harmony of the Spheres, and renounces any counting (MK 1974–1984): “*Durch mich sint alle dink gesacht: / der helle grunt der ist gemacht, / das in dem himmel fride han, / die gottes willen han getan. / die engel wegten nimmer glich, / wem sie nicht gottes fride rich. / ich in dem himmel wart bekant, / da ich den ersten engel bant / und dampfte in der flammen glut / der argen slangen übermut. / wo min der menseche nicht engert, / sin ere schranzet gottes swert.*”³⁵

The shared presence here of the angel-motif accentuates these voices within the cycle of the twelve virtues. Together they evoke repeatedly and concretely the risk of pride for

³¹ Cf. Ch. HUBER, *Alanus ab Insulis in mittelhochdeutschen Dichtungen*, p. 292, n. 160.

³² A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 260: “I guard the gateway to God’s heart. The tip of my spear is very sharp; Pride pricked herself on it, so that she must always bear [the signs] of suffering. My hand drove her, and all her angels, down from heaven, once they had turned their will to sin. I also thrust the first man out of Paradise, once he plucked the apple from the top of the tree. The sin of disobedience must always suffer pain through me.”

³³ A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 286: “My hand thrust the first angel violently into the pit of hell, where he shall remain eternally. Down here I [deal] in a similar manner with that man who never recognised my path. Whoever tries to maintain power without me – his fall will have no end [K. Stackmann]. If I do not walk before a man, he will never come to God.”

³⁴ A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 293: “I am his word and also his child. The heavens are formed by me [K. Stackmann]. Through me God created the stars, and also the power of the spheres, the sea, the earth, fire and also the air, the angels and the pit of hell. God could not exist without me. For that reason, I am the shrine of all the virtues. My hand holds the spirits of heaven. Any man who separates himself from me and leaves my path completely, he cuts himself off from the bands of the angels.”

³⁵ A. VOLFING, ‘*Der meide kranz*’, p. 304: “All things are created through me. The foundations of hell are made so that those who have carried out the will of God may enjoy peace in heaven. The angels would never move regularly if they were not richly endowed with the peace of God [1978]. I became well known in heaven when I bound the first angel and extinguished in the pyre of flames the arrogance of the evil serpent. Where a man does not desire me, his honour will be cutdown by the sword of God.”

human salvation. With the cosmological extension to the celestial movers there is surely an intended link to Charles' verdict in the first book. The present four virtues represent a devout deterrent from the exaggeration of scientific ambition. In this way we can understand the messages of these virtues as credits to the emperor.

After *Theologia's* verdict in favour of the virtues – and despite a seeming end to the work (MK 2288: '*hie sal des buches ende sin*') – *Natura* goes on to share a cosmological model. According to HUBER she engages a tension between astrology and ethics.³⁶ The beginning of her speech recalls the structure of *Theologia's* speech before the virtues. Yet in a second element of her discourse, *Natura* adds cosmological and astronomical facts without any angelic references before enumerating the twelve zodiacal signs and explaining their meanings (MK 2289–2380). In the end, the narrator cuts her off and also cuts her down to size with the same argument used earlier by *Theologia* (MK 2281–2392): "*Der meister dises buches spricht: / got die nature hat geticht, / die engel und die speren breit / und was das zentrum wunders treit, / in wisheit und in tugent, kraft: / davon Natur-en wurde slafft, / und sal sich tugent glichen nicht, / sint sie von tugent ist geticht: / die tugent, in der got geschuf / die dink in sines wortes ruf, / die selbe tugent die was got / und got die tugent sunder spot.*"³⁷

The *meister* of the book refers to the angel-motif again and views the angels as part of Creation. He resolves the whole model of the text twice: Creation comes from God, but in the view of mankind, the order of this text comes from the poet, just as the regulation of knowledge and faith comes from the emperor.³⁸

4. Arranging Nature

Heinrich of Mügeln illustrates with his decision-making processes a dynamic system that still needs an authority like Charles IV, the ideal ruler who – thanks to his virtues and ability to discern and make distinctions – articulates a workable balance between knowledge and faith. In the context of the emperor's verdict in the first book, Ch. Huber refers to

³⁶ Ch. HUBER, *Alanus ab Insulis in mittelhochdeutschen Dichtungen*, p. 298.

³⁷ A. VOLFING, '*Der meide kranz*', p. 345f.: "The Master of this Book speaks: God has formed *Natura*, the angels and the wide spheres and all the marvels of the centre with wisdom and with virtue and power. It follows that the authority of *Natura* is vitiated and ought not to compare itself to virtue, since it itself is formed by virtue: the virtue with which God created all things through his Word, this same virtue was God and God was virtue without doubt."

³⁸ Michael STOLZ, *Heinrichs von Mügeln Fürstenpreis auf Karl IV. – Panegyrik, Herrschaftslegitimation, Sprachbewusstsein*, in: J. Heinze – L. P. Johnson – G. Vollmann-Profe (ed.), *Literatur im Umkreis des Prager Hofes der Luxemburger*. Schweinfurter Kolloquium 1992, ed. Berlin 1994 (= *Wolfram-Studien* 13), pp. 106–141, p. 140: "Der neunte Hymnus im dritten Buch [der '*Consolatio*' des Boethius, L. Oetjens] überhöht diese Bildlichkeit des Herrschers, des weisen und gerechten Lenkers noch mit folgenden Worten: '[...] tuo splendore mica; tu namque serenum, / tu requies tranquilla piis, te cernere finis, / principium vector dux semita terminus idem.' Vor diesen Zeilen offenbart sich die kosmisch-ontologische Dimension, welche Mügeln's Preisspruch zugrunde liegt. Der Monarch erscheint als ein metaphysisch überhöhtes Abbild jenes schöpferischen Ursprungs und bewirkt – wie dieser zugleich Ausgangspunkt und Ziel – die Ausgießung des dichterischen Lobes. Auf einer hierarchisch tieferen Stufe partizipiert der Dichter damit am Wesen des gottähnlichen Herrschers, welches er einerseits im Vollzug der ästhetischen Gestaltung schafft. Deutlich wird dieses interaktive Verhältnis nicht zuletzt in dem Minimalpaar der Verben 'tichte' und 'richte', welche jenen die Beständigkeit dichterischen Gesangs und herrscherlichen Wirkens beinhaltenden Schlußpassus von Strophe 19 (vv.15/17) reimend umschließen."

similarities with Dante's *'De monarchia'* (III, 15, 15): "*Sic ergo patet quod auctoritas temporalis Monarche sine ullo medio in ipsum de Fonte universalis auctoritatis descendit: qui quidem Fons, in arce sue simplicitas unitus, in multiplices alveos influit ex habundantia bonitatis.*"³⁹ *'De monarchia'* was known in fourteenth-century Prague, where Cola di Rienzo visited in 1350, and he wrote the first 'cisalpine' commentary.⁴⁰ Dante's work describes the perfect ruler as a universal one, but he also mentions the boundaries of human knowledge. In this context, the angel-motif appears in the third book:

III.3.1. "*Multa etenim ignoramus de quibus non litigamus. 2. Nam geometra circuli quadraturam ignorat: non tamen de ipsa litigat; theologus vero numerum angelorum ignorat: non tamen de illo litigium facit; Egiptius vero civilitatem Scitharum ignorat, non propter hoc de ipsorum civilitate contendit.*"

III.15.12. "*Cumque dispositio mundi huius dispositionem inherentem celorum circulationi sequatur, necesse est ad hoc ut utilia documenta libertatis et pacis commode locis et temporibus applicentur, de curatore isto dispensari ab Illo qui totalem celorum dispositionem presentialiter intuetur. Hic autem est solus ille qui hanc preordinavit, ut per ipsam ipse providens suis ordinibus queque connecteret. 13. Quod si ita est, solus eligit Deus, solus ipse confirmat, cum superiorem non habeat.*"⁴¹

Although Dante has a different aim with his political theory, I think there is a similar intention to create a balance between religion and power when he evokes the unfathomable mystery of Creation, yet at the same time presents the monarch as the needed ruler at hand.⁴² By establishing the University of Prague, Emperor Charles IV pursued a synthesis of religion and knowledge.⁴³ The ruler, who had known an excellent education and was himself deeply pious, rated learning highly for its symbolic and practical significance.⁴⁴ He also acted self-assuredly in that he did not invoke the Pope even once in the founding charter: "*Im Hintergrund steht hier das Ringen zwischen kaiserlicher und päpstlicher Macht*

³⁹ Ch. HUBER, *Alanus ab Insulis in mittelhochdeutschen Dichtungen*, p. 461.

⁴⁰ We do not know whether Charles was aware of the work; from his point of view the commentary takes an exaggerated attitude against the Pope. Francis CHENEVAL, *Die Rezeption der Monarchia Dantes bis zur Edition Princeps im Jahr 1559. Metamorphosen eines philosophischen Werkes*, München 1995, pp. 249–257.

⁴¹ Richard KAY (ed.), *Dante's Monarchia*, Toronto 1998, p. 96/316, transl. p. 97/317: "III. [...] For we are ignorant of many things, about which we do not dispute. For example, the geometer is ignorant of how to square the circle, but he does not dispute about it. Again, the theologian is ignorant of how many angels there are, but he too does not dispute it. So also, the Egyptian is ignorant of the cultural of the Scythians, but he does not consequently argue about their culture. [...] 15.12. And because the disposition of this world, who is called the inherent of the circling of the heavens, it is necessary that the caretaker of the world be established by one who contemplates the total disposition of the heavens as forever present, so that the beneficial doctrines of freedom and peace may be applied appropriately to diverse times and places. Such a one can only be he who preordained this disposition so that by means of it he might in his providence link every thing to its assigned role. 13. If it is so, God alone elects, he alone confirms, since he has no superior."

⁴² F. KAVKA, *Am Hofe Karls IV.*, p. 151: "Das politische Denken des karolinischen Hofes wurde allerdings auch von Thomas von Aquin und – besonders die Frage des Verhältnisses von Kaiser- und Papsttum – sogar von Dantes Werk beeinflusst. Seine Schrift *'Monarchia'*, die er Karls Großvater Heinrich VII. widmete und die die Kirche wegen Antipapalismus verboten und öffentlich verbrannt hatte, wird kaum Hoflektüre gewesen sein. Gedanken aus diesem Werk, übertragen in die philosophische Dichtung *'Die göttliche Komödie'*, haben aber mit Sicherheit am Prager Hof Wirkung gezeigt. Bei Karl IV. kann die Kenntnis dieser Schrift lediglich angenommen werden, als gesichert gilt sie jedoch bei Kanzler Johann von Neumarkt, der in seiner Bibliothek nicht nur über das Werk selbst, sondern auch über einige Kommentare hierzu verfügte."

⁴³ Cf. M. STOLZ, *Vivus est sermo tuus*.

⁴⁴ Cf. Eva SCHLOTHEUBER, *Der weise König. Herrschaftskonzeption und Vermittlungsstrategien Kaiser Karls IV. (1378)*, in: *Hémecht: Zeitschrift für Luxemburger Geschichte* 63, 2011, pp. 265–279.

im 14. Jahrhundert. Vordenker der zeitgenössischen Staatphilosophie wie Dante, Marsilius von Padua und Ockham vertreten den kaiserlichen Parteienstandpunkt und propagieren eine Trennung der kaiserlichen und päpstlichen Gewalt. Sie legitimieren den säkularen Herrschaftsanspruch mit dem Argument, dass die Macht dem Kaiser von Gott und der Natur direkt zuflüsse, ohne über den Papst vermittelt werden zu müssen.”⁴⁵

In the case of the university, a judicious balance of knowledge and faith also directly implicates the faculty of theology, because Charles’s foundation ended the monopoly of Paris and Oxford.⁴⁶ But, with this orientation to theology, Charles also strengthened the aura of his own authority, which was based on his image as a wise and venerable ruler.⁴⁷

The role of nature relating to God as the Creator and to mankind has been much discussed in medieval poetry. U. Friedrich points out that nature has been used equally as topos (*natura formatrix*) and as an independent principle (*mater generationis*).⁴⁸ After the emperor’s verdict, Heinrich of Mügeln continues discussing the dominance between *Natura* and the virtues. *Theologia* prefers the virtues, but explains also their relation. At the very end, it is the *meister*’s turn, and he can also put the poem into the right order (MK 2281–2392). Stolz outlines the meaning of Heinrich of Mügeln: “*Als ein prominenter Vertreter erscheint dabei der Dichter Heinrich von Mügeln, der mit seiner tiefen Gelehrsamkeit einen Brückenschlag zwischen der lateinischen und der volkssprachigen Kultur seiner Zeit herstellte. Für die Frage nach der Reflexion und Inszenierung von Rationalität in der mittelalterlichen Literatur ist Mügeln ein wichtiger Zeuge, da er in seinem dichterischen Werk die Vernunft nicht nur thematisiert, sondern in ihrer Leistung und Gefährdung auch diskursiv vorführt. Mügeln operiert dabei auf dem Fundament scholastischer Philosophie und Theologie und strebt [...] nach einer Synthese von Glauben und Vernunft. Die rationalitätskritischen Tendenzen, wie sie in der zeitgenössischen Mystik begegnen, sind Mügeln fremd. Und doch zeigt er in seiner poetischen Praxis durch kalkulierte Maßnahmen die Grenzen des Rationalen auf.*”⁴⁹

‘*Der meide kranz*’ can be regarded as a panegyric on Charles IV, of course. Heinrich of Mügeln also acts as an artist in his own right. He valorizes as such his own distinctive manner of ordering content as a way to communicate intellectual and even cosmic order.

⁴⁵ Frank REXROTH, *Deutsche Universitätsstiftungen von Prag bis Köln. Die Intentionen des Stifters und die Wege und Chancen ihrer Verwirklichung im spätmittelalterlich deutschen Territorialstaat*, Köln – Weimar – Wien 1992, p. 77; M. STOLZ, *Artes-liberales-Zyklen*, p. 575.

⁴⁶ M. STOLZ, *Artes-liberales-Zyklen*, p. 574: “Der Artes-Wettstreit lässt sich als Reflex des mit der Aristoteles-Rezeption unter Druck geratenen Wissenschaftsgefüges betrachten. [...] Die Theologie steht an der Spitze der mittelalterlichen Fakultäten, so auch an der 1347/48 gegründeten Prager Universität, mit der man Mügelns ‘*Der meide kranz*’ in Zusammenhang gebracht hat. Das seit den Anfängen der Prager Universität bestehende Theologie-Studium führte zur Aufhebung der bis anhin geltenden Monopolstellung von Paris und Oxford. In diesem Zusammenhang ist die kaiserliche Entscheidung von ‘*Der meide kranz*’ zu sehen.”

⁴⁷ Cf. Peter MORAW, *Prag. Die älteste Universität in Mitteleuropa*, in: P. Moraw, *Gesammelte Beiträge zur deutschen und europäischen Universitätsgeschichte: Personen, Strukturen, Entwicklungen*, Leiden 2008, pp. 79–100.

⁴⁸ Udo FRIEDRICH, *Die Ordnung der Natur: Funktionsrahmen der Natur in der volkssprachlichen Literatur des Mittelalters*, in: P. Dilg (ed.), *Natur im Mittelalter*, Berlin 2003, pp. 70–83.

⁴⁹ Michael STOLZ, *Vernunft. Funktionen des Rationalen im Werk Heinrichs von Mügeln*, in: Klaus Ridder (ed.), *Reflexion und Inszenierung von Rationalität in der mittelalterlichen Literatur*, Blaubeurer Kolloquium 2006, Berlin 2008 (= Wolfram-Studien 20), pp. 205–228, p. 206f.

Karl IV. als Ordnungsstifter: Der Wissensdiskurs in *‘Der meide kranz’*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Mit der Gründung der Prager Universität strebte Kaiser Karl IV. eine Balance von Religion und Wissen an, die sein Herrschaftskonzept insgesamt prägt. Ein Blick auf die vernakulare Dichtung am Prager Herrscherhof des 14. Jahrhunderts bezeugt eine intensive Auseinandersetzung mit den Erkenntnissen der Naturwissenschaften und der christlichen Weltordnung. In *‘Der meide kranz’* kommt Karl IV. eine besondere Rolle zu: Heinrich von Mügeln stellt ihn als gelehrten und sakral-theologischen Herrscher dar. Er konstruiert anhand bekannter Vorbilder wie dem *‘Anticlaudianus’* Alans von Lille Entscheidungssituationen, deren inhärente Ordnung spezifisch auf die Urteilsfähigkeit Karls IV. zugeschnitten ist und ihm als Richter zugleich kaiserliche und sakrosankte Macht zuspricht. Das Engelsmotiv, das zugleich religiös und (in Hinsicht auf die Sphärenbewegung) naturwissenschaftlich besetzt ist, legt die diskursive Spannung des Textes offen.

Lena Oetjens
University of Zurich
Deutsches Seminar
lena.oetjens@ds.uzh.ch